

Bob Smith (cc Bernabei, Hoch) re your 12/8 and enc. 12/7

12/9/71

Pursuit of the tracing of the pistol strikes me as a rather worthwhile research project. Perhaps you can also go further with the rifle order than Hoch and I have, but I think you may want to check my file on this. I also think Paul's recollection will be much better than mine on this. We worked on it together and he has copies of everything I have.

A general comment: Bernabei is an authentic expert, and I think you should send him a copy of your 12/7 memo with attachments (I have not time now to read the attachments but I respond in order that this not get forgotten in the press of too many things). What may seem reasonable on the basis of logic may not be on the basis of ballistics, for example. I am sending him the carbon of your 12/8 to me.

What Hoch and I have includes even the copies of the magazines the FBI dusted (negatively as I recall) from Alba and reports (inadequate) on the tracing of the magazines there. It seems to me that there was a mysteriously, pretendedly official visitor before the FBI.

An assortment of people, including Garrison and I think Sprague, have conjectured that some kind of explosive ammo was used. Leon Davidson postulated ice bullets. I see no reason for anything like these farout things, particularly not if the M-C was planted to be found and was not used, as is my belief. They needlessly complicate the entire affair and introduce (Bernabei can tell you if this is wrong) hazards in return for no gain. The most important single factor in a successful assassination, aside from the competence of the shooters, is true flight of the projectiles. Explosive bullets and things of that sort are not as dependable in flight and, with good marksmen, serve no real need. The weapon and the type of ammo used depend upon the conditions of the assassination. For example, if it were to be other than close (and any part of Dealey Plaza is close to the most remote part in terms of shooting) a small-calibre, high-velocity ammo is best, for the lighter weight of the projectile and its higher velocity give it a flatter trajectory over a longer range. And this kind of ammo, in the readily-available hunting or varminting varieties, is designed to mushroom and fragment on impact, a humanitarian consideration when used against animals. Larger calibres behave similarly, but they require more opposition in fragmenting and mushrooming. This remains relatively little opposition. As Bernabei explained it to me in the King assassination, the use of .30-06 rather than .243 in the Remington-Loft-Cole line makes it more likely that the shot would be a success were the window of a car to have been between the shooter and the victim, the difference being accounted for by the greater mass of the .30-06 and the larger size of the projectile, tending to carry more of it to the target. He can probably explain this better than I, or you can see his explanation in my files.

It is my recollection that what I located in the Archives includes or fits what Hoch had that shows the torn part of the page is identical with the missing piece sent to Klein's. One aspect that may be worth further inquiry is the dependability of the handwriting analysis on which, as I recall, all that order hangs.

I also have a Remington catalogue you might find interesting. It pictures and describes all the ammo they make and gives the characteristics. I also have relevant pages from standard sources on the kinds of ammo that could have been used in the King case. Some may help.

First I would add this opinion: we have to get away from the hangup that military ammo was used in the crime. I do not believe it was and, aside from the alleged traces of copper found on the JFK clothing in back only, which does not mean military ammo but includes it, there is no evidence of which I know indicating that it was. The behavior, or the behavior as we have been told and as we have been able to reconstruct, indicates that it wasn't and it was the worst kind to use for that job. Until I can arrange the printing of POST MORTEM I am not disclosing all I have on this. The simplest persuasion is the spectro case. If it backed the official mythology, do you doubt for a moment they'd withhold it and force me to court on it? Rather would they be anxious for it to be known. And my work on the pictures I showed you and Jim summer before the one past has gone very far forward. The entire story is false. All of it, in all particulars.

There is another possibility in "late issue" other than currency in the ad, one I consider more likely. "Issue" has a special meaning in the military. I think as used in this ad it may well have been intended to mean a later model, one issued to the troops later.

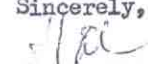
On substitutions, particularly on inexpensive items bought by mail, I haven't used the mail-order houses much in recent years, but it was always the standard practise to substitute the similar if available when what was ordered was not. In those cases, it seems to me an order clerk included a printed or mimeographed form so stating or made a note on the copy of the order returned with the shipment. I think Klein's would have done something like this in the normal course of business. Of course, what is not lightly dismissed is the official failure to check it all out and provide a persuasive explanation. As I recall, it was either ignored or close to it.

One of the aspects of these ads that have always interested me is the purchase of junkier stuff than was necessary, better equipment being available in the same price range. And, if LHO had known what he was doing, he could have bought identical crap for less in Dallas and without leaving the traces mail entailed. The ads you copied show much better stuff for close to the same price, both rifles and pistols, so if he got what is attributed to him, he sure as hell didn't know what he was doing to begin with.

Another general comment, and this addresses the matter of explosive and other exotic bullets: I think successful assassinations require the greatest simplicity, in concept, execution and participants. The Sprague extension of Garrison is sheer insanity. Where could you find at least 50 (he had these on the scene!) who could escape detection and keep their mouths closed? And what was the need for them? Same with umbrella signals (a conjecture made easier by ignoring the second one!). What need? Or for radio? What is wrong with the first shot as all the signal needed, if any was? The more complicated we make all of this, the more we escape reality, confuse ourselves and frustrate success.

On Wecht: I also do not expect he will get access, but I regard it as the worst potential disaster if he should. There is too little political understanding and thinking. As of now there is relatively little we can learn from access to the film anyway, for we (meaning for the most part I, given the ethics and dependability of the critical community) know most of what it can show. And some of what it cannot. The many ways in which this can be counter-productive have not dawned on those who have not thought it through or lack the knowledge of fact that is requisite for doing it. It was a serious error on his part not to discuss this with me first, particularly because he was privy to some of my newer data and knew what I was working on and had an invitation to come here to examine all of it dating from the Halleck hearing. Perhaps in the days when we were restricted to the 26 and what any of us could extract from them such an approach, in vacuo, could be justified. But not now. So, despite my great respect for Cyril's competence and objectives, I am satisfied that his frustration in this endeavor is in our interest. In telling you this, I also tell you what you may not know, that I was the first to ask for access to this film, the day it was announced that it had been transferred. It took much to change my thinking.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg

My under Oswald file

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